

PLACING MY TOPIC IN THE BIG PICTURE - HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Main Events Which Occurred Right Before My Topic:

NAACP Legal Defense & Education Fund Formed

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issues Executive Order 8802, the "Fair Employment Act", to require equal treatment and training of all employees by defense contractors.

3 April 1939, Appropriations Bill Public Law 18 was passed by Congress containing an amendment designating funds for training African-American pilots. The War Department managed to put the money into funds of civilian flight schools willing to train black Americans.¹

Social & Cultural Climate of the Time Period:(describe)

Segregation, Jim Crow Law; Blacks who served in WWI and did not experience segregation in Europe, became unwilling to suffer discrimination at home

Because of Great Migration, Blacks were becoming more assimilated and respected in Northern Cities

**People in America, seeing Hitler's persecution of the Jews, began to question their own persecution of blacks

Key People in the Time Period:

President FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt (supporter of civil rights), President Eisenhower, Booker T. Washington founded Tuskegee University in 1881

The effort was led by such prominent civil rights leaders as Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, labor union leader A. Philip Randolph, and Judge William H. Hastie.

FDR's Black Cabinet, including Mary McLeod Bethune

MY TOPIC

Tuskegee Experiment –
Tuskegee Airmen
WWII

Political Climate: (Briefly describe)

Country:
Concern for spread of Communism

World: Political unrest in Germany, Poland, Italy, Russia, Japan fosters concern for the possibility of a world war

Arts, Entertainment, Literature, Athletics
Harlem Renaissance heightened respect for African American culture and abilities; Jesse Owens wins Olympic Medals 1936

Economic Conditions: (Briefly Describe)

Country: Great Depression of the 1930s

World: Post WWI Germany is devastated economically

Science & Technology of the Period:
Military technology in the 1930s saw growth in air power. Civilian and commercial planes also saw great development during the 1930s.

CHALLENGES: From all accounts, the training of the Tuskegee Airmen was an experiment established to prove that "coloreds" were incapable of operating expensive and complex combat aircraft. Stationed in the segregated south, the black cadets were denied rifles. Tests given the blacks were designed to show their incapability, but the airmen showed they were ready and capable of serving in the military.

Pres. GW Bush said of the airmen, when awarding medal recently, "They were fighting two wars. One was in Europe, and the other took place in the hearts and minds of our citizens."

ALTERNATE PERSPECTIVES: Some civil rights activists feared that a separate unit of blacks would further segregate the military.

